

Drabbles

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Summary: Collection of drabbles and challenges - mostly from Tumblr.
Expect lots of pairings and lots of variety.

1. Chapter 1

A/N: For Psythia who requested #23 from the 54 Writing Prompts, "Is that my shirt?"

Warnings: language

Pairings: 2x3

Twenty Three

"This is pathetic, you get that, right?"

Duo glared but Wufei, as supremely unconcerned by Duo's ire as he always had been, didn't appear phased by the irritation in Duo's eyes.

"You're basically Prince Charming looking for Cinderella at this point. It wasâ€¦ misguided but typical Duo at first, when you were just going around our dorm room asking if anyone knew who had dressed up as Zorro for Halloween, but when you started posting about it on Yik Yak and twitter it got sad. But now? _Now?_"

"You know," Duo finally spoke up as he took a flier out of his mouth and taped it to the wall of the science building, smoothing his hand down over the illustration of Zorro's mask and the words _Have you seen this man? Please call Duo -7892_, "no one asked you to tag along."

"If by no one you mean _you_ didn't ask me to, I am well aware."

Duo frowned at the wording and then sighed. "Hilde. Hilde told you to tag along."

Wufei sniffed and affected a long-suffering expression. "She asked me to supervise this delusional manhunt, yes."

Duo rolled his eyes. Sometimes it was nice to have friends who cared. Sometimes it was annoying as hell.

He counted out the fliers in his hand - another twelve left and he still wanted to head over to the Student Center and the library before he had to go to work in half an hour.

"C'mon, we need to head across campus," he told Wufei.

His roommate sighed but fell into step beside him as they left the science building and walked back out into the harsh winter weather.

"You realize you've become a joke on our floor," Wufei said, shoulders hunched against the wind and the cold.

"I was always a joke on our floor," Duo muttered in response, flicking his long braid in Wufei's direction to emphasize his point.

Wufei rolled his eyes.

"You can't tell me this guy you hooked up with on Halloween was so amazing that you have to find him again but you didn't even think to get his name?"

Duo flushed.

"Iâ€| we didn't actually hook up."

Wufei arched an eyebrow.

"We just talked."

"You barricaded yourself into Hilde's room for three hours to talk to this guy while we were stuck using the third floor bathroom and you didn't even get his name?"

"Okay, if you two sex maniacs could just, you know, not have sex every time you start to argue about justice and the environment or whatever you could have waited until later instead of having to fuck in a bathtub. And we were talking about other stuff."

"Like what?"

Duo shrugged and turned away. "Just stuff."

They had talked about everything - from the Star Wars posters all over Hilde's room to their unease about the Presidential election the next week and their hopes for a Bernie victory to their mutual loathing of peanut butter. Duo had never connected with someone so quickly - and maybe it had been the six shots of tequila he had done with Wufei and Hilde when he first arrived at the party, but Duo had felt a genuine and deep connection with Zorro.

He had first spotted him across the crowded living room of the house, leaning back against the wall, arms crossed and cape arrayed

perfectly as he surveyed the party with what looked like boredom behind his mask, his wide lips tilted upwards in a laconic smirk. Their eyes had met and Duo had felt the tequila kick in very fast - so fast that he and Zorro were stumbling up the stairs, away from the party, hands and mouths all over each other, without saying anything to each other at all. They had only stopped kissing, only stopped trying to reach for each other's dicks, when Duo tripped over the stuffed Ewok near the foot of Hilde's bed and Zorro had caught him, had actually laughed when Duo called himself a dude in distress and from that moment, even though the sexual tension was there, they had just sat and talked. And talked until Duo fell asleep leaning against Zorro's shoulder.

When he woke the next morning, Zorro was gone and Duo was naked. He'd managed to find most of his clothes - Hilde and Wufei had decided to hide them all over the house as revenge for losing out on the chance to fuck horizontally instead of vertically that night - except for his shirt.

The t-shirt, Duo's only effort to put on a costume for the party that he hadn't wanted to go to in the first place, was a long sleeved tuxedo t-shirt that Duo knew, from several lengthy diatribes on the subject, annoyed the shit out of Wufei.

He suspected that instead of hiding the shirt, Wufei had decided to burn it and he was still thinking of how to best avenge the much loathed piece of clothing.

Still of thinking of that, and of Zorro.

"When I said you needed a rebound after Heero, you spending three hours talking to some guy in a mask wasn't what I meant," Wufei huffed.

Duo gave him a look. "You'd rather I spent three hours fucking him?"

Wufei nodded.

"Sex doesn't solve every problem, you get that, right?"

Wufei smirked. "Maybe you're not doing it right."

Duo managed to control his shudder. It just wasn't right to hear about the sex of life of his best friend since childhood - Hilde - and his uptight roommate who bizarrely treated sex like something he was double majoring in.

They made it to the library and took a moment to just stand in the heat and thaw out before Duo headed towards the coffee shop and the cork boards set up for students to post fliers on.

He had to wait for a few students to finish adding obscene amounts of sugar to their coffees before he could get to them, but then he posted yet another flier, keeping his head down because as much as he tried to seem unconcerned by how lame this course of action was, he was very, very aware of what an idiot he must seem.

Flier up, Duo turned and bumped into someone.

"Shit."

He didn't know who said it - himself or the unfortunate student whose way _way_ too hot coffee was soaking through Duo's clothes and -

Duo frowned, momentarily distracted from the heat and wet of the coffee as he looked at the t-shirt of the student.

At the tuxedo t-shirt of the student.

"Is that my shirt?"

He looked up, _way_ up and _holy shit_.

It was Zorro.

Amused green eyes, no longer behind a black mask but now obscured by auburn hair. Laconic smirk on a mouth that really must have been genetically engineered to be that distracting.

"Zorro?"

The smirk increased and the eyes turned warm.

"Duo."

-o-

2. Chapter 2

A/N: For Ry who requested #30 from 54 Writing Prompts, "Do you think you could just please go one day without pissing me off?" With 2x3

Warnings: language

Pairings: 2x3

Thirty

The cupboards had been reorganized.

Trowa opened the one above the coffeemaker, the one that _should_ have held the coffee mugs, specifically _his_ travel mug, and instead was confronted with the collection of porcelain cats that had decorated the mantle of the fireplace when they first moved into the apartment.

Trowa opened the next cupboard.

Plates.

Pilsners.

Shot glasses.

Tupperware.

More plates.

Bowls.

Little plates.

Canned goods.

Plates -

How many fucking plates did they even have?

Heero chose that moment to walk into the kitchen. He surveyed the ten open cupboard doors in silence and walked past Trowa to open the fridge.

"Hn."

Heero stood, staring at the fridge, and Trowa felt his annoyance and dismay over the cabinets morph into fear.

What had happened to the fridge?

Trowa stepped up behind Heero and saw that it, too, had been subjected to reorganization and what looked like a more thorough cleaning than it had probably ever seen before.

Everything was arranged by color. Water, vodka, milk, mustard, lemon juice, orange preserves, ketchup -

"What the fuck is wrong with him?" Trowa muttered.

Heero shook his head, grabbed one of his sickeningly green breakfast smoothies - sandwiched between two bottles of Heineken and a green-labeled container of parmesan cheese, and closed the fridge.

Trowa sighed and turned back to the cupboards, wondering if there was any chance of finding his coffee mug without having to go and _ask_.

Heero leaned against the stove and watched him fruitlessly open a few more cupboards.

"He's awake," Heero offered between sips.

Trowa glared. "I'm sure he is. He's probably counting down the minutes until I go in there and ask him where my damn mug is."

Heero nodded in agreement. "Probably."

Trowa asked himself, not for the first time, _why_ he had agreed to move off campus and into an apartment with Heero and his best friend and baseball teammate, Duo.

Heero was fine - more than fine. He and Trowa had dated, briefly, before deciding that, as good as the sex was, they were better suited as friends than anything else. But Duoâ€|

It was like he had decided his sole purpose in life - outside of maintaining unbelievably high grades considering his devotion to

baseball and partying - was to annoy Trowa. It had started the very first day after they moved in, when Duo had barged into the bathroom, without knocking, to interrupt Trowa while he shaved before taking a shower. Duo had stood there, staring at Trowa's naked body, for a full minute before Trowa cleared his throat and Duo flushed. He'd expected the other man to leave - had wanted him to - but instead Duo had smirked, offered up a way too chipper "good morning" and asked Trowa when he could catch the next performance.

This - reorganizing the cupboards and the fridge - was only yet another example of all the ways Duo went out of his way to annoy the shit out of Trowa.

He finally gave up and left the kitchen, stormed down the hall and, not even bothering to knock, opened Duo's bedroom door.

Duo was, surprisingly, still in bed. He was almost always the first one up of the three of them, always lurking in the kitchen or the bathroom with way too much to say that early in the day.

He jumped when Trowa banged the door open, though, and blinked red, swollen eyes at Trowa.

What the hell?

It looked like he had been crying.

Trowa was momentarily thrown by that and he found himself wondering what had happened. Probably someone had told Duo off for being the utterly annoying shit that he was.

"Where is my mug?" Trowa growled.

It took Duo a moment, he rubbed at his eyes and shifted around under the blankets and Trowa glared.

"Oh. Right. Sorry. I was - last night was weird and I just had to do something, you know, to -"

"Where is it?" Trowa interrupted, knowing that Duo might launch into a fifteen minute monologue if he didn't head him off immediately.

"Top rack of the dishwasher if no one's unloaded it. It was in the sink last night and I -"

"I didn't ask you to wash it."

"Yeah, because you're under the delusion that you don't actually need to wash it and -"

"If it melted -"

"I checked the fucking heat settings. It should be fine," Duo was glaring himself, now, clutching his comforter and looking, for once, uncomfortable with Trowa's ire.

Trowa had the sudden realization that he was being an ass, that he had overreacted and - and he had just stormed in here and yelled at Duo for washing his coffee mug for him.

He sighed.

"Last night was weird?"

Duo frowned and he looked wary, as though expecting Trowa's words to lead to a trap.

Trowa gestured at Duo's face. "You'reâ€| upset or something. What happened?"

Duo snorted and shook his head. "Forget it man. None of your fucking concern."

Trowa was taken aback by the uncharacteristic ice in Duo's voice.

"Duo -"

"If you don't mind, my morning class was cancelled and I'd like to get some sleep so could you kindly get the fuck out?"

-o-

It wasn't until that afternoon, as Trowa settled into his normal chair in the middle of the lecture hall for Russian History, that Trowa even saw Duo again. Despite both being history majors, they had never had a single class in common except for this one. All history majors were required to take at least one course in European history, so, even though Trowa was concentrating on American history and Duo on Middle Eastern, they had taken Russian History because the professor was a vocal and unapologetic anarchist whose lectures tended to devolve into diatribes against the failures of capitalism.

Usually, Duo sat near Trowa - beside, in front or behind him - and usually, Duo passed at least a few notes with running commentary on the lecture or lewd suggestions of how certain conflicts could have been resolved with orgies instead of assassinations.

It was, Trowa would never admit, something he actually looked forward to.

Today, however, Duo took a seat in the last row of the lecture hall, not even looking in Trowa's direction before he walked past.

Trowa found himself clenching his jaw and his pen equally tight.

He had the crazy idea to just get up and go sit beside Duo, but he abandoned the thought as the prof entered the room, followed closely by Wufei, who endured the prof's glare and even looked contrite for a moment before he worked his way down the rows and took the seat on Trowa's right.

"Where'sâ€|" Wufei's voice trailed off as he looked around and spotted Duo. "So you finally did it."

Trowa frowned. "Finally did what?"

"Acted like enough of an asshole that even Duo won't forgive you,"

Wufei said, not even looking at Trowa as he pulled out a notebook and started to copy down the outline the prof was writing on the front chalkboard.

Trowa scowled and he wanted to say something - wanted to defend himself, wanted to point out that _Duo_ was the asshole here - but the prof started to lecture and Trowa had seen what the man did to students who tried to carry on side conversations while he was speaking.

Trowa was able to concentrate on the lecture, but only barely. He was too used to Duo's presence and found himself looking up whenever the prof said something that, in another context, could be taken in a _very_ different way. But Duo wasn't beside him, wasn't smirking and furiously scribbling notes for Trowa to shake his head and roll his eyes at.

By the time the lecture ended, Trowa felt strangely bereft and decided to catch up to Duo before he left the room.

The prof, however, had other ideas. He held Trowa after to discuss his latest paper, to try and convince him that American history was for half-wits and capitalist dogs and really, Trowa should change his focus to Russian History because he had a natural understanding of the complexities and a flair for writing that would be wasted on the fools in American history. It didn't matter, the prof assured him, that he had his thesis half written and absolutely no course work to support the change of fields. He could catch up, he could revise his thesis and -

It was twenty minutes before Trowa could politely extricate himself, and by that point, Duo's beat-up Jeep was gone from the parking lot behind the lecture hall.

Trowa sighed as he checked his watch. 5:15. No doubt Duo was on his way to his job at the dive bar a few blocks from their apartment where he tended bar a few nights a week.

For some reason, the idea of letting Duo just go and continue to be this angry - to let him keep avoiding Trowa - didn't sit well.

Duo had never blown up like that at Trowa, no matter how angry Trowa got with him for whatever new scheme to annoy him Duo had come up with, no matter how snarky Trowa was - Duo just shrugged it off, smirked or offered a comeback before going on with his day.

But for some reason, today was different. Today was _wrong_ and Trowa couldn't let it keep going.

So he drove over to the bar and parked himself in a corner, careful to avoid the sticky counter top of the bar, and waited for Duo's shift to start.

When Duo spotted him, Trowa saw his mouth twitch, saw his lips curve upwards for a second before flattening out and then turning downward in a frown and it made Trowa feel like even more of an asshole.

Duo sighed and walked over.

"What can I get you?"

"Can we talk?"

Duo shook his head and gestured to the nearly empty bar.

"No can do - a bit busy here."

Trowa glared but Duo just stared back at him.

"Look, Duo, about this morning, I -"

"You want to order something or what?"

Duo appeared completely unfazed by Trowa's glare.

"PBR."

Duo nodded and walked away. He deposited a slightly overflowing pilsner glass in front of Trowa only seconds later and walked away without a word.

Four PBRs, a plate of cheese fries and countless glares later, Duo took his break and Trowa threw down enough money to cover his bill before he left the bar and walked around to the back, where he knew Duo took his break even on the coldest of nights because he hated the stale cigarette smell of the bar and tried to escape it whenever he could.

Sure enough, Duo was leaning against the graffitied brick wall, eyes closed and head tilted back while the streetlight spilled across him.

"I'm sorry."

Duo started, eyes opening comically wide.

"What the fuck? Tro, just -"

"I'm sorry for yelling at you this morning. Youâ€¦ you did something nice and I acted like an asshole. I'm sorry."

"Yeah, well -"

"But you - you reorganized the entire kitchen and you color coded the fridge. Who does that?"

"For fuck's sake!" Duo interrupted angrily. He tugged at his bangs with his fingers and he looked on the verge of violence. "Do you think you could just go one day without pissing me off?"

Trowa stared, at a momentary loss for words.

"Me?" He demanded when he was finally able to get a handle on how absurd the question was. "I piss you off? Duo, you annoy the shit out of me every day. You -"

"I try my damndest to be nice to you! I try to fucking - Trowa, you've been bitching about how the kitchen storage makes no sense for months now. And you always say you can't find shit in the fridge and I - I was just trying to do something right for once since

apparently I'm fucking incompetent and hell, if I can't make it into Stanford for grad school I kind of need to find something else to do and I figured I could practice -"

"You didn't get in?"

Duo deflated and he shook his head.

"No."

Trowa frowned as he realized.

"Yesterday - you got the rejection letter?"

"Email. I got the rejection _email_, Tro. I'm not even worth the cost of postage."

"That's -"

"Better for the environment, yeah. I know. I'm not really in the mood for one of your sustainability lectures right now, though."

"I was going to say that's complete bullshit and they must be idiots."

"Oh."

Trowa walked over and leaned against the wall beside Duo. He didn't really know what to say - Duo wasn't the kind of person who appreciated sympathy and he hated to hear false platitudes about 'things happen for a reason.'

"I piss you off everyday?"

Duo sighed. "Forget about it. I just - I'm in a shitty mood and I should have kept my mouth shut."

"No, I want to hear what you think."

Duo snorted and shook his head. "Trust me on this, Tro. You really, _really_ don't."

"I do."

Duo groaned. "Tro, seriously. I - I'm just being an idiot and it's nothing."

"You're right. You do try to be nice to me," Trowa sighed. "Iâ€¦ I don't always see it and I'm not good at saying thank you."

"Please don't do this to me, Tro. Not tonight. Not - just please, please go back to being an asshole."

Trowa frowned. "You just asked me not to piss you off and now you _"

Duo was suddenly surging forward, suddenly wrapping his arms around Trowa's neck and kissing him and it was completely unexpected, completely without finesse, completely amazing.

Trowa pulled Duo closer and he kissed him back, falling into the sensation of Duo's mouth and his heat and his scent as though it was the most natural thing in the world. As though this was what they were supposed to be doing. Should have been doing all along.

When they finally pulled away, when Duo finally cleared his throat and Trowa saw his flushed cheeks and his swollen lips, Trowa couldn't help but smirk.

Duo, looking anywhere but at him, didn't see the expression.

"I, ah. Sorry about that. I just - like I said. I'm a fucking wreck and Iâ€¦ you piss me off every day because you're just there and you're so fucking perfect and -"

"I thought I was an asshole?"

Duo finally looked at him, saw the smirk and he frowned.

"Youâ€¦ you're not pissed."

"Should I be?"

"I mean, I just threw myself at you - literally. And you, well, you kind of hate me."

"I don't hate you, Duo."

"Oh yeah. Sure. You just spend each day regretting moving in with me and Heero and wishing I would just crawl off and die."

"I -"

"Don't even bother to deny it."

"I don't want you to crawl off and die."

Duo shook his head and ran a hand through his bangs.

"Sure."

"Duo. You color coded the fridge for me." Trowa grabbed Duo's hand and pulled him close.

"Yeah, well -"

"And you kissed me."

"Look, if this is some kind of pity -"

"Duo. Stop talking."

Duo glared at him and Trowa smirked again.

He reached out and brushed his thumb over Duo's lips.

"I had no idea kissing you would feel so perfect," Trowa said before leaning down and replacing his thumb with his lips.

3. Chapter 3

A/N: For Crown-of-Winterthorne who requested #18 from the 54 Writing Prompts, "You're my favorite muse," with 2x?

Warnings: angst, language, sexy times, historical AU

Eighteen

It was just after noon and the sun, directly overhead, filled the streets with heat and light and stink.

That was the thing about London, Duo had learned. In the winter it was bitterly cold, in the spring it rained every damn day, and in the summer - when it wasn't raining it was way too hot and it smelled like the piss and shit and unwashed people who occupied it. Fall was, Duo had discovered, the only time when living in London wasn't awful.

Of course, awful just about summed up Duo's life regardless of where he lived, so, aside from London providing a new litany of internal complaints to stack against previous ones for Paris, New York, Singapore and San Francisco, Duo knew it didn't really matter.

Not much did.

Not much had since Father Maxwell had died last spring, only a few days after Sister Helen, both of them falling ill so fast, dying so miserably and quickly, that Duo hadn't even had time to be upset with them for it until after, when he stood alone in the rainy cemetery and watched the undertaker heap mud over their coffins.

And then he'd been alone, in the damn rain in London in the spring and he'd had nothing but the clothes on his back - the fancy sack suit that Father Maxwell had insisted on getting for him, the waistcoat with orange silk on the back that Sister Helen had laughed at when Duo had put it on for the first time, the linen shirt that was finer and cleaner than anything he had ever had before, the neck tie that chafed, the black leather boots that had gleamed with polish - the gold crucifix that Helen had worn, and the Bible that Father Maxwell had read from every night while tending to the sick in the slums of London.

Now, more than a year later, the Bible was long gone - bartered, six months ago, for a few coins and the medicine that should have, but didn't, keep Hilde alive. Hilde, the prostitute who Father Maxwell had cared for, who very well might have been the one to pass on the sickness to Helen and him, who had taken Duo in, had taught him which alleys were best avoided and which theatres to lurk outside of to pick pockets and which street corners to stand on and how to hold his breath while sucking off the men who paid for a pretty, long haired boy to fuck.

The clothes, once so fine that Duo had felt he looked like one of the nobility or at least a wealthy merchant, were now threadbare and the boots that he had so loved hadn't been polished in so long they were more brown than black now.

The crucifix, though, Duo wore around his neck and clutched in his

fingers at night as he curled up in doorways and rubbish bins.

It had, ironically, been that crucifix that had changed Duo's life.

Two months ago, as Duo lounged against the streetlight on his usual corner, as he tried casual jibes with Trowa, the experienced prostitute who ran the corner, and Heero, the copper who probably would have given his right arm for the chance to just take Trowa away and live in the country and raise sheep or something unfathomably dull, it had happened.

Three gentlemen with more money than taste, judging by their garish waistcoats, striped trousers and ridiculously tall top hats.

Heero had greeted them, had made a show of trying to get Trowa and Duo to leave them alone but had been laughed off while the three fawned over Trowa, passing over Duo entirely and Heero had scowled, had hesitated and then melted away into the night so that he didn't have to see the man he loved sell his body.

Duo had kept one eye on them, as the four men moved into the shadows, ready to intervene if he needed to, but he had been distracted by the sound of a match striking, the flare of light just a few feet to his left.

It was another man - just as well appointed as the three rakes in the alley with Trowa, but clearly with better taste, his suit a soft, somber gray that looked like rising steam in the dim light.

"A God fearing whore?"

The voice had been soft, low and full of humor and arrogance and Duo had felt his fists clench.

The man came closer when Duo remained silent, had tipped his hat back and Duo had caught a glimpse of stunning features, of icy eyes and a cruel mouth but then he had been distracted by the long blonde hair, pale as moonlight, brushed carelessly over the man's collar.

The man blew a lazy curl of smoke in Duo's direction as he looked him over, eyes critical, and Duo knew the man saw every flaw, every weakness and he shivered.

The man made a tutting sound when Duo looked away and it annoyed Duo enough that he turned to glare at him.

His lips curved upwards in a slow, sensuous smile that had Duo's heart pounding and his palms growing sweaty.

"Aren't you afraid of suffering the punishment of eternal fire?"

Duo remembered the verse. Jude 1:7. Remembered Father Maxwell's alarm when he had caught Duo behind the rectory, his clothes half off and his tongue down the throat of Quatre Winner, son of the church's wealthiest benefactor. Remembered the tight line of Helen's lips and the sadness, the overwhelming sorrow in both their voices as they told Duo just how very, very wrong it was to love another man.

Duo shrugged one shoulder and affected a careless smirk.

"Who's to say desire is unnatural?" He said to the man.

He chuckled, low and cold, and used the silver tip of his cane to tap the crucifix around Duo's neck.

"I believe He says."

"Yeah, well, I don't see him doing much about it, do you?" Duo let his voice drop, let it become the purr that Hilde had taught him and he saw the way it affected this man - the same as all the others, in the end.

He'd expected a quick, rough fuck in the alley, had anticipated having to maneuver past Trowa and his men but instead, the man had held out a thick, creamy card and waited while Duo stared at it in confusion.

"Come by in the afternoon. That's when the light is best."

Duo had been confused by the directions, even more than he was confused by the card, but he had taken it, had let his eyes linger on the black script.

Lord Miliardo Peacecraft

The address was near Belgrave Square. Fashionable, but only just.

When Duo looked up, the man was gone.

It had taken a two weeks, of rough sex and stale bread and wet, miserable nights before Duo took the card out of his pocket and presented it to a butler whose sneer suggested he would rather cut off his nose than have to smell Duo in close proximity.

Duo had been led through the house, hadn't even bothered to be discreet about his awe at the well appointed furnishings, hadn't bothered to hide his confusion when he was led up, up, and up to the very top floor of the house while the butler knocked on a closed door.

It had opened only a moment later, Lord Peacecraft scowling, dressed in only trousers and a thin linen shirt, looking ready to yell at the interruption until his cold eyes landed on Duo and his entire demeanor transformed.

Duo had followed him into the room, had seen the huge bed pushed against a wall, the flood of light from the large windows, and he had started to undress without being prompted. He knew, after all, what he was there for.

Or he thought he had.

Peacecraft had laughed, had stopped him from removing his waistcoat with long, strong fingers and tipped Duo's chin upwards.

"I have no interest in fucking you, dear boy," he had said in that same patronizing tone.

Duo had frowned.

"Well, not _today_, " Peacecraft amended.

He had taken hold of Duo's jaw, had turned his head first one way and then another before nodding.

"Yes. Just as I thought. Go, sit by the window and I can sketch you while there is still light."

And it had been weeks of just that.

Duo arriving and sitting while Peacecraft drew him, painted him, moved him about like a marionette, touching his body with a careless familiarity that both inflamed Duo and made him feel worthless.

And gold, more coin than Duo had seen since the collection plates at Father Maxwell's church, pressed into his palm as the sun set and Peacecraft packed away his pencils or brushes or pens.

Six weeks of that.

And today, as the sun beat down on Duo, as his wool suit itched and his linen shirt clung to him with sweat and grime, Duo followed the butler - Otto, who still, even after all this time, refused to address Duo or look at him with anything less than disdain - up, up and up, Duo expected the routine to remain unchanged, expected to sit and hold his breath in the hope that Peacecraft would touch him, would look at him with those freezing eyes and see something worthy.

But today, when the door opened, Peacecraft was shirtless and smirking and Duo could hear laughter. Bright, artificial, _feminine_ laughter.

He felt hot and cold all over and he dug his fingers into the hem of his jacket, worried at the fraying fabric, and he glared at the floor instead of the smear of rouge on Peacecraft's cheek where, clearly, some tart had kissed him.

"Ladies, I believe our time is at an end today."

Duo had listened to them complain, listened to them cajole, listened to the rustle of fabric and the amused groan of Peacecraft as he was fondled and kissed and begged and finally, after what had felt like hours, three women had tramped past Duo, their perfume as vivid as their makeup, their clothes in disarray and their eyes sharp as they raked over his too slight, too dirty, too unfashionable form.

And then Peacecraft was ushering him inside, was closing the door and Duo felt—

Bereft.

As abandoned as he had been the day Father Maxwell and Sister Helen had been returned to the earth and he fought against the urge to scream or cry or run or - or do anything.

He stood there. He continued to glare at the floor, and he waited for instruction. Waited for the lump in his throat to go away and the

burning in his eyes and he waited and he hoped.

"Duo."

Peacecraft didn't let him wait. He walked over and tipped up Duo's chin in a gesture now well practiced and his cold eyes and cruel mouth tightened as they took in Duo's expression, as they took in the pain and anger and betrayal that Duo didn't hide fast enough.

He sighed and he stepped away and Duo could see, could feel his disappointment.

Duo reached out, caught his hand and tangled their fingers together.

"I can be better. I can be better than them. I can - I can put on makeup and a corset, if that's what you want. I can do whatever they do. You can fuck me however you want. I can be better. I can - just give me a chance."

Peacecraft looked at their joined hands, and Duo knew he should let go, should step back, should admit defeat and run but he couldn't.

He couldn't give up this beautiful god.

So he knelt and he worshipped him, he unfastened his trousers with unsteady hands and he smoothed down the silken drawers and there he stumbled, confronted with Peacecraft's already hard cock, with the red, swollen flesh and he had never seen a cock so beautiful before and he tried to swallow all of it, tried too fast and he choked and coughed but then he tried again, silently begging Peacecraft, begging God, to let this be good. To let it be better. To let it be enough.

The whole time, Peacecraft stood silent and still, letting Duo plead with his mouth, with the only thing he had ever had confidence in.

When Peacecraft came it was with a soft, almost silent grunt, a shudder, and hot, bitter cum that filled Duo's mouth and throat, that dribbled over his lips and down his chin as Peacecraft pulled away.

Duo looked up, then, finally, to see the verdict - but Peacecraft was pulling out his sketchbook and his pencils, a frown drawing his perfect pale brows together and he stood there, trousers around his thighs, spent cock wet from Duo's mouth and his own pleasure, and he looked at Duo with those cold eyes that saw everything and he drew him.

Duo felt numb. Felt cold all over and he - he couldn't think.

He could do nothing but kneel there with cum on his face and tears in his eyes and emptiness in his heart.

He didn't know how long it was, didn't know how many pages Peacecraft flipped through and discarded, but eventually the sun began to set and the book and pencils were tossed aside and Duo closed his eyes.

It was time. Time to stand up and take the payment and leave and - and he knew, _could feel it_, that things had ended. He had not been better. Had not been enough. Could offer Peacecraft nothing that came close to what those three women had and this was it.

His last moment to look into those cold eyes.

But when Duo raised his gaze from the floor, when his eyes met Peacecraft's they were, for the first time, thawed.

"My Duo," the man said and he pulled Duo to his feet, pulled him close and kissed his lips gently. "You are my favorite muse."

He didn't know what it meant, the words or the touch, the warmth and the tenderness.

Duo could barely remember what it felt like - to be held, to hear his name said with affection.

He didn't know how to react.

"You will always be better than anyone or anything else that I have," Peacecraft continued, his fingers running through Duo's hair, uncaring of the tangles or the grease. "You will always be mine."

4. Chapter 4

A/N: for Crown of Winterthorne who requested #18 from 54 Prompts with 2x?, "It's just thatâ€¦ well, my favorite character just died."

Warnings: language, spoilers for the Captive Prince trilogy

Pairings: 2x5

18

Duo was tired, beyond tired, really, after pulling a forty-eight hour long shift at the hospital and he needed, more than anything else, to develop a way to sleep and eat while at the same time taking a shower.

He should have grabbed an IV bag and just hooked himself up with a pillow in the shower and called it good.

Of course, if he did that, Duo would never, _ever_ hear the end of it from his roommate.

Speaking ofâ€¦

Duo opened the door to their closet of an apartment as quietly as possible. Usually their schedules were the same, and they suffered their internship together, but this week their resident had decided to split some shifts up and so Duo and Wufei were working on different schedules, Wufei likely still asleep after getting off of his shift six hours ago.

Except, when Duo stepped into their apartment, he saw Wufei sitting on the couch, face red and wet and -

"Jesus fuck, are you crying?"

Wufei looked up with alarm, dropping the book and the kleenex in his hand and sprinting for the bathroom.

He locked it before Duo could reach him, and Duo thudded into the barrier helplessly.

"Shit, Fei, what happened? Did - did someone die? Is everything okay?"

Silence, and then sniffing.

"Fei, please, tell me what's wrong."

They had only known each other for six months, meeting during their first shift and reaching eagerly for the flyer advertising a studio loft apartment at the same time. It had been expensive as hell, out of either of their budgets, but each of them had been couch surfing, waiting for their first paycheck and doling out ramen like they were going to starve, and had decided what the hell - it was big enough for two mattresses, and had split the cost and moved in together.

It had been a challenge, at first because Wufei was annoying as hell and so, he claimed, was Duo. It had remained a challenge, though, because as soon as Wufei stopped being annoying he started being distracting because he was snarky and gorgeous and brilliant - and Duo had been in love with him for months now, had had to force himself not to stare or say anything that would ruin their friendship because he knew that Wufei couldn't possibly feel the same way and at least, at least Duo could be his friend if not his lover.

"Nothing," Wufei insisted and the sadness in his voice twisted Duo's guts.

"Fei, what - what can I do?" Duo begged, unable to bear the thought of him crying alone in the bathroom. He had absolutely no idea what could be making Wufei this sad, and even if there hadn't been a door between them, Duo had no idea how to comfort Wufei.

"Nothing. I'm fine. I-"

"If you're fine then open the door, Fei."

Duo could practically feel Wufei glaring at the door, but after a moment, the lock disengaged and Duo gently pushed it open.

Wufei was leaning against the sink, hugging himself and Duo swallowed with difficulty. He looked so damn miserable.

"Fei -"

To hell with it. Duo closed the space between them and wrapped his arms around the other man.

Wufei was stiff at first, unyielding and no doubt furious at the

intrusion into his personal space, but then he practically melted into Duo's arms and hugged him back.

Duo ran a hand through Wufei's hair, feeling the silken strands for the first time and wishing it was under different circumstances.

"Tell me," he begged.

Wufei sniffled again and pressed his cheek against Duo's shoulder.

"It's just...My favorite character just died."

It took a moment for the words to register, and a further moment to get hold of himself, to not give into his first reaction, to not demand that Wufei repeat himself.

He was crying over a dead fictional character?

Duo had seen Wufei dispassionately tell a woman that her eight year old daughter had died in surgery just three days ago.

And now he was _crying_ over a book?

What the -

Duo frowned. What was Wufei even reading these days?

"What, ah, what book?"

"Your _Captive Prince _books."

That took Duo completely off guard.

Wufei had sneered at them, had arched an eyebrow when Duo had decided not to take a nap during his shifts last week so that he could devour the books and he had shaken his head in dismay and judgement when Duo had teared up at several points.

"Who, ah, who died?"

"Nicaise," Wufei practically whimpered.

"Nicaise? _Nicaise_ is your favorite character?"

Thatâ€¦ that was almost as shocking as Wufei crying in the first place.

"Why on earth do you even like him?" Duo asked.

"He reminded me of you."

That gave Duo pause.

"I, ahâ€¦ is that a good thing?"

"What do you mean?" Wufei pulled away and Duo looked into his red rimmed eyes.

"I meanâ€¦ youâ€¦ Iâ€¦" Duo had no idea what he was trying to ask.

"I'm crying my eyes out over a dead _fictional character_. Because he reminded me of you."

"Soâ€¦ you don't want me to die?"

"Of course I don't, you idiot. I lov -" Wufei stopped speaking, snapping his mouth closed while his entire face turned a brilliant red.

Duo stared and then he grinned.

"You what?"

Wufei shook his head and looked away.

"Maxwell, just -"

"You love me." Duo reached out and turned Wufei's head back towards him, forcing the other man to meet his eyes, willing him to see the emotion in Duo's own.

Wufei's eyes widened.

"I love you, too," Duo said as he ran his thumb over Wufei's cheek, wiping away his tears. "And I love that you cried over Nicaise. Because he reminded you of me."

5. Chapter 5

A/N: For simulacrayn who requested #48 from 54 Prompts, "My parents are coming over in ten minutes so please put some clothes on."
Featuring 13x6, with a guest and bonus appearance by Dorothy.

Warnings: language, sexy-ish times?, drugs, underage drinking

Pairings: 13x6,

Forty Eight

Summers at the Hamptons had stopped being entertaining when Treize was seven. That had been the summer when, instead of occupying himself with sandcastles and tennis lessons and birthday parties, he had had to learn how best to take care of his mother when she had the worst of her hangovers. Divorce, which seemed to suit Treize's father and his string of super model girlfriend's just fine, had certainly taken it's toll on his mother.

So, that summer, Treize had learned how to make Bloody Marys. He had learned how to lie and pretend that his mother was perfectly sober, had learned how to steer her in conversations and around the golf course and he had learned to never, ever allow anyone to see the turmoil he felt.

It wasn't his job to feel, to need. It was his job to look after her

and take care of her and so he only ever cried into his pillow, late at night, after she was tucked into bed, after he had cleaned up the vomit around the toilet so that the maid wouldn't see it in the morning, so that no one would know. So that no one would judge.

Twelve years later, and Treize's feelings for the Hamptons had not improved. True, it wasn't the fault of the beach or the beach houses or any of the people occupying them that his life had become one complex, farcical charade. But it wasn't as if the place, or the people, made it any easier. Going away to college last year, running across the country to Stanford where no one knew his father's name, or his mother's, where no one knew about the messy divorce or the overdoses that, no matter how hard Treize had tried, had resulted in his mother staying in the hospital and rehab centers too many times. He ran away and he had had every intention of never coming back, until, the summer after his freshman year, his mother had fallen in love and become engaged and wouldn't Treize come to the Hamptons, wouldn't he meet this paragon of virtue who was guaranteed to make her happy when she had been so very miserable for the last twelve years?

So he came, ignoring the pain and the anger and the anxiety that churned in his gut and he forced his most pleasant smile when he met the man. A tennis pro. A young tennis pro who had only ever managed to be ranked 28th in his prime, some six years ago, and who had no hopes of ever progressing in his sport and no doubt saw the opportunity to progress his wealth on the arm of one of New York's most prominent, and troubled, socialites.

Treize took the first opportunity to pull the man aside, to take him out sailing alone while his mother drank mimosas and played bridge with women that Treize had heard gossip about her countless times, and he told him very frankly that there was no money. His father had paid her, while Treize was underage, and yes, she had some money of her own, from her grandmother, that was enough to get by on but her lifestyle was all because of Treize - because of the money he had inherited from his grandparents, and from the sum his father had settled on him as something between an apology and a payoff.

Treize hadn't been surprised to see the man go pale, hadn't been surprised when his previously flowing if pedantic conversation died and when they returned to the house just at sunset, he wasn't surprised when the man made some excuse to leave, to go back to the city to meet with his agent, when he offered false promises to return.

He wasn't surprised when he found his mother two days later, pale and cold, in a pool of vomit and spilt champagne and pills.

The ride to the hospital had been long, had left him ready to vomit himself, left him ready to vow to never drink again. To never do anything wrong again if only she would live.

And she did, she lived and she returned to the house five days later and she threw him out and told him to never, ever contact her again. Told him that he had ruined her life for the last time.

He had been so shocked, so devastated and unable to even process it that he had walked to the beach and sat down in the sand and let the

late May breeze whip against him and he had felt bereft.

He wasn't sure how long he had been there, how long he had stared into the crashing waves and the fading sun, but suddenly the light was blocked out and he looked up to see a tall, broad shouldered figure with ridiculously long blond hair.

"Treize?"

He frowned, the voice was familiar, but

"Zechs?"

The blond man sat down beside him, somehow making it look effortless and graceful as he stretched out on the sand, propped himself on an elbow, and smirked over at him.

Treize hadn't seen him in years, not since their last year at The Anderson School and the summer after, when they had been fourteen and he and Zechs had gone sailing together almost every day, earning snide remarks about their future chances at winning the America's Cup but, in truth, Treize and Zechs had merely sailed far enough to be away from prying eyes and spent their time in a youthful, clandestine affair that brought doom onto Zechs when his father found out. He had been shipped off, after that, to some Swiss boarding school and Treize had figured that was par for the course - it had been silly, really, to think he could have something good in his life.

"I haven't seen you in a while." Treize felt like a moron. He was usually so cool, so cold and so in control of his emotions and his surroundings but not now. His mother, Zechs, there was too much for him to calculate, for him to consider, and he found himself stumbling.

Zechs smirked, his wide lips just as beautiful as they had been five years ago, his eyes still sparking with humor and heat but the rest of him had changed. He had filled out, had filled up to the point that Treize wondered which of them was taller. And his ridiculous hair was longer than ever.

"No, my father insisted we summer in the French Riviera instead, after you debauched me."

Treize glared.

"I debauched you? You were the one who put his hand down my shorts first," Treize argued.

"Only because you kept waving your ass in my face," Zechs' smirk grew broader.

They stared at each other a moment, and Treize had the someone redundant realization that they were no longer fourteen.

Five years to grow, to gain independence and experience and still, Treize looked at those lips and he felt his stomach do a curious summersault.

"How have you been?" Zechs asked after the tension between them became almost palpable.

Treize laughed and the bitter sound that escaped his lips surprised even him.

"Oh, delightful," he said and he looked away from Zechs, from those blue eyes that turned sharp.

"Treize -"

"Where are you staying?" He cut off whatever Zechs had been about to say, unable to bear it.

"With your cousin, actually, Dorothy?"

"Dear god why?" Treize had to ask. Dorothy, four years younger, was a precocious bitch. She had been a menace since the moment she had been born and age had not changed that. Treize saw her only when he couldn't avoid it - meaning Thanksgivings and Christmases and the occasional New Year's Eves. People accused Treize of being cold and unfeeling, but anyone who did so had never met Dorothy, had never seen just what a Manhattan socialite with complete disdain for the world was capable of.

Zechs heaved a long suffering sigh and shrugged one shoulder.

"I suspect I'm there to irritate her boyfriend du jour, some hapless Winner brat who thinks he's cunning enough to keep up with her schemes."

Treize arched an eyebrow. "And is he?"

Zechs snorted. "No. Who is? In any case, what are your plans for tonight? Her parents are out and I promised to chaperone some party for the children."

Treize could well imagine just how horrid that would be for Zechs - alone, surrounded by fifteen year olds too full of themselves, too done with the world and with unrestricted access to drugs and alcohol.

"Are you actually inviting me to suffer alongside you?"

"Yes? I promise I'll make it worth your while," Zechs added with a sly smile.

-o-

And he did.

The party was, as Treize had foreseen, absolutely awful. Kids that he knew only vaguely, from a lifetime of social events and awkward introductions, ran around half naked and more than half drunk and it wasn't until dawn when the last of them left or passed out and Zechs and Treize were able to finally, finally be alone.

Zechs commandeered one of the few bottles of Glenmorangie that hadn't been wasted on the children, took Treize by the hand, and led him to the guest suite he occupied.

Treize had expected the bed, had expected slow sex and the burn of

the whiskey in his throat and likely on his body but instead, Zechs had run a bath and undressed Treize with gentle fingers and eyes that saw far too much.

Treize had laid on Zechs' chest, in the hot water, and they had shared the bottle and the last five years of their lives and Treize felt, for perhaps the first time since he had been seven, that things would be fine. That he would be fine.

Of course, the mood was entirely ruined when Dorothy burst in, bright eyes smudged with makeup and her hair a wreck, with absolutely no interest in the sight of two naked men.

"My parents are coming home in ten minutes, please put some clothes on. And help me clean up this mess!"

And then she was gone, confident her orders would be obeyed, and Treize and Zechs had to laugh.

Before, of course, they put some clothes on and helped her clean up the house.

No one, they had learned the hard way years ago, disobeyed Dorothy.

-o-

So I changed it JUST a little from coming over to coming home. Sorry. Had to.

6. Chapter 6

A/N: For Ceeceereeves who asked for #32 from the 50 Prompts, "I think I'm in love with you and I'm terrified" with 2x6

Warnings: angst, language, sexy times, deeply inappropriate relationship

Pairings: hinted at 2x3, 2x6

32

It had been the first day of the fall semester and already, Zechs had been in a foul mood at the prospect of another year of hell.

Zechs had been skeptical at first, when the boy had walked into his office and introduced himself with a casual knock on the doorframe and a cocky grin and dancing blue eyes.

He looked young - young for his age, twenty one, but overall just so young. His cheeks were still full and round even though the rest of him was thin and wiry and he looked like a puppy. Acted like it too, some of the time. So eager to please.

When it suited him.

"Duo Maxwell. I'm your slave or whatever."

Zechs had raised an eyebrow, at the words, at the too casual

demeanor, at the lithe body that managed to look indolent even in the dress shirt and khakis that looked pressed to within an inch of their life, at the _hair_.

"Or whatever?" He had echoed sardonically, his mind already coming up with all sorts of ways he could put that long braid of hair to good use.

Duo shrugged one shoulder, grinned wider, and leaned one shoulder against the doorframe of Zech's office.

"Yeah. I'm your new TA."

Zechs had snorted. "They gave me a _freshman_ for a TA?"

Duo had flushed, his body going a bit rigid, and Zechs suspected it wasn't the first time he had been mistaken for younger.

"I'm a doctoral candidate," Duo had assured him.

"Really?" Zechs leaned back in his chair and looked the boy over again, letting his cool gaze wander over him in an assessing way that made the boy squirm and stand up straight. "Who is your advisor?"

"You are," the boy said between clenched teeth.

Zechs frowned at that. He wasn't particularly interested in that part of his job - mentoring students when it came at the expense of his research - but he _had_ looked at the list of new graduate candidates and the name Duo had not been on it.

"David," the boy growled, "My name is David Maxwell - ring any bells?"

It did, now. Zechs remembered Howard, the department chair, going on and on about some _enfant terrible_ with a gift for numbers and an absolute disregard for authority of any kind. Homeschooled by some kind of religious zealot, graduated from Berkeley at nineteen, already a Master's from Northwestern and now here he was, starting his doctoral work at MIT. Under Zechs.

That thought had him looking at the braid again.

"David," Zechs nodded and he saw the way the boy flinched, saw how little he cared for his given name. "You're the idiot who wants to pursue nanotech and biomaterials as a joint field."

The boy opened his mouth to argue but Zechs held up one finger. Duo fell silent, face going even redder, eyes going icy and narrowing dangerously. "I wasn't asking for your input. You want to pursue a project that has stumped the best minds in the _world_ for the last thirty years and you don't seem to even care what a waste of time this is for everyone around you, for _me_. What on earth makes you think you can solve this when no one else can?"

The boy crossed his arms over his chest and he glared.

Zechs made an impatient gesture with his hand and the boy arched one insolent eyebrow at him.

"Oh, do I have your permission to speak now?"

"If you can't even recognize a question, then -"

"I _know_ I can solve this, just like I _know_ the reason your little project for Dow is failing because you haven't considered the way that the weight of the lithium is fucking up the stability of the _"

"_How do you know about that?"_

The boy smirked and his confidence was suddenly back. He shrugged one shoulder and his eyes were once again merry.

Zechs glared and he felt cold anger settle in.

He had been struggling with the polymer for months now, had been courting failure for the _first_ time in his entire career and - he considered the boy's words. Holy shit. He was right.

Zechs shoved a pad of paper and a pen to the edge of his desk.

"Show me."

And the boy, cocky smirk back in place, had swaggered over to the desk, flicked his braid over his shoulder, and done just that.

-o-

Months of working with him, of having him grade the _awful_ introductory level courses Zechs taught, of having him stay late to work in the lab, of giving the boy the bare minimum of time to work on his own projects because he had too quickly become too invaluable with Zechs' own, had given Zechs a certain reluctant appreciation for him.

He never would have chosen Duo for a TA, for a student. Zechs would never have chosen _anyone_. He hated mentoring - it was better left to people like Noin, who seemed to thrive on _teaching_ the way that Zechs got a high from his successes in the lab.

But Duo competent and brilliant and, when he wasn't being annoying as hell, blessed with deeply twisted sense of humor that mirrored Zechs' own. He was, if Zechs cared to be honest with himself, much like Zechs himself had been at that age - smarter than anyone around him, uncaring that he made everyone else look like fools, unwilling to compromise or slow down for the sensibilities of the people in charge.

Duo had asked him, one night after three pots of coffee and pages and pages of data readouts, both of their eyes red and their breath bitter, why Zechs wasn't simply working in a private lab where he could avoid his responsibilities to those lesser than him all the time.

The question, the phrasing, had made Zechs chuckle. Duo knew him well, even after such a short time. But that didn't mean Zechs wanted to let the boy know _more_ about him, so he had brushed off the

question, had told Duo to get back to work and stop running his mouth and Duo had glared, as he always did when Zechs rebuked him, and returned to work.

Zechs would have loved to be in a private lab, would gladly walk away from academia and never look back, if it wasn't for the family, for his obligations. His entire damn line, all the way back to some medieval monk at the Sorbonne, had believed in teaching, in mentoring and Zechs had an obligation to continue that line. An obligation to carry on the family tradition and a legal stipulation to do so if he wanted to inherit the sizeable fortunes set aside by his grandparents.

He knew Duo came from nothing, knew the boy couldn't afford to take out student loans - or was too afraid to be in debt - and tended bar at some dive in Boston in the few spare hours he had away from Zechs, hours when he really should be sleeping. He doubted Duo would understand the need to fulfill familial obligations, or the desire to maintain a lifestyle that ensured independence and comfort.

-o-

It wasn't until the start of the spring semester, until the night that Zechs glimpsed Duo in the hall outside of his lab flirting with some tall, auburn haired man with green eyes, until Duo stood up on the tips of his toes and pressed a clumsy, furtive kiss to the man's lips before ducking his head and turning away, that Zechs started to think of the boy as more than a potential asset in his lab.

He had, of course, been fixated on that damn braid since their very first meeting, had amused himself with all sorts of ways to put it and the boy to good use. But those thoughts had been idle, over coffee between projects or in the shower while he masturbated or, twice now, while he fucked some barely worth his time piece of ass.

Seeing Duo kiss that man, seeing his red face and bright eyes when he stepped into the lab after, had turned those thoughts from idle to burning. He had been particularly acerbic that night, had shot down every idea Duo suggested, especially the good ones, with such vitriol that Duo's face became an almost permanent shade of red.

And he'd gone too far - well, too far in Duo's estimation, but just far enough in Zechs - by mentioning the boy's dead parents and suggesting even they, rotting corpses that they were, would be disappointed by Duo's denseness.

Duo had sucked in a breath, had shoved his safety glasses off his head and jerked off his gloves and stalked towards the door to leave.

"Just where are you going, David?"

That had stopped him, the icy tone in Zechs voice and the use of the name he hated.

Zechs had watched his shoulders tense, had watched his whole body vibrate with rage for a moment before Duo turned to face him, tears in his eyes. On his cheeks.

"I don't deserve this shit," Duo had snapped. "I work my _ass_ off for you, every fucking day and I -"

Zechs snorted a derisive laugh and Duo stopped talking and just stared at him.

"Do you know what you really deserve, David?" Zechs asked in a low, dangerous voice.

Duo caught the shift, caught the change in current as though he had been electrified and he looked like a deer caught in the headlights, staring at his impending death and unable to move.

Zechs made a tsking sound when Duo remained silent.

"And still the trouble with being able to answer a question," Zechs gave an irritable sigh and he gestured towards the door. "Lock that and pull the shade."

Duo still made no move.

"_Do it!_" Zechs bellowed and Duo jumped, turned and locked the door with clumsy fingers and pulled the shade, released it too soon, and had to pull it back down again.

He remained at the door, facing away from Zechs, but even from across the lab, Zechs could see the way his shoulders rose and fell with shaky, unsteady breaths.

"Since you seem unable to answer the simple question I put to you, allow me," Zechs said. He stood up and he unfastened his trousers and pushed them and his briefs down to his thighs as he spoke. He was already half hard, already aroused by his own frustration and jealousy and Duo's clear trepidation. He stroked himself as he continued to speak. "What you really deserve, David, is to be put in your place. And do you know where your place is, David?"

No answer, no response at all except for Duo clenching his hands into fists at his sides.

"Your place is on your knees, bowing down to your superiors, taking a cock up your ass or deep down your throat. What you _deserve_ is to be fucked over and over again until you can barely walk or breath, until you're dripping with semen."

Zechs heard the sharply indrawn breath and he allowed himself to smirk when Duo finally turned around, when his eyes went wide at the sight of Zechs leaning against a lab table and stroking his own cock.

And then Duo licked his lips.

"Fuck you," he said, but his voice was a broken whisper.

Zechs arched an eyebrow. "Oh, I don't think so. The idea is to fuck _you_. To use you like the good little slut you are. What was it you said? That first day, when you introduced yourself?"

Duo's pupils were dilated and his hands were no longer fisted, instead, his fingers were digging into his thighs while his gaze was

fixed on Zech's swollen, leaking cock.

"_Answer me!"_

Duo jumped and he swallowed hard and raised his eyes to meet Zechs.

"I'm your slave. Or whatever."

Zechs nodded in agreement. "Then start acting like it. Get over here and get to _work_."

Duo stumbled, tripping over a rolling stool in his haste to follow the order, but then he was in place, on his knees in front of Zechs and his warm, wet mouth was closing over the head of Zechs' cock.

Zechs smirked and he took hold of Duo's braid, chuckling when the boy's eyes narrowed, and he wrapped it around and around his hand like a leash and used it to hold the boy in place while he thrust his cock into Duo's mouth.

He coughed and choked and his eyes watered further.

Zechs arched an eyebrow and he sneered but Duo pulled back only a little before opening his mouth wider and waiting.

Waiting for Zechs to fuck him in earnest.

-o-

It had been the first day of the fall semester, and Zechs had been irritated with the heat, with his colleagues, with the fresh-faced girl who smiled at him and gushed over how wonderful it was to have _him_ as her advisor and how very, very excited she was to potentially assist him on whatever projects he was working on and how truly _amazing_ his polymer for Dow was and -

Zechs had cut her off, unable to bear any more, and told her briskly that she would not, under any circumstances, set foot in his lab or _ever_ touch any of his projects.

She had stumbled on her way out and Zechs had allowed himself a small measure of pride over that, a moment to celebrate the minutest of victories before returning to the grant proposal that deserved his full attention.

Deserved, but was not receiving.

Every time Zechs heard the outer door open - the door that led from the main corridor to the row of offices for Materials Engineering - every time he heard a male voice, Zechs found himself on edge, anticipation coiling through his body followed swiftly by disappointment and disgust.

Until finally, at _seven_ that night, hours after Zechs should have gone home - hours after everyone else _had_ - Duo walked into his office.

The setting sun filtered through Zechs windows, giving the boy a

golden glow that was completely unnecessary, gilding the lily, in Zechs' mind.

Duo was tanned and smirking and so very clearly happy that Zechs felt it like a physical blow.

He had spent the summer in Switzerland, working at the LHC and he should absolutely not be that tan if he had been spending so much time underground and in labs. He had emailed Zechs every day. Long, detailed analysis of the work he had been doing, one line messages with questions or thoughts for future research. Every day. And Zechs had not allowed himself to respond to a single one.

"Missed me?" Duo guessed and his grin had never been so self-assured as it was in that moment.

He closed and locked the door without being told, pulled the screen down and then walked around the room, closing the blinds on all of the windows in the corner office until they were in gray darkness.

Duo tugged Zechs' chair away from his desk, turned it and then knelt down in front of him and pushed Zechs' thighs apart before scooting closer.

He nuzzled along the inseam of Zechs' trousers, lips and teeth and tongue dragging along the seam, so hot and wet that Zechs could feel it through the fabric.

"I've missed you," Duo said, seemingly unperturbed by Zechs' silence. "God, I've missed you."

Nimble, confident fingers opened the fly of his trousers, tugged fabric out of the way, glanced over his painfully hard cock.

"I wasn't lonely, of course," Duo said, the words hot on Zechs' cock. "A German took an interest in me - offered to teach me all sorts of things. I think you know him? Treize Khushrenada?"

Zechs clenched at the arms of his chair.

Of course he knew Treize - it was how he had gotten Duo the internship in the first place, calling Treize and asking, begging in the end, just as Treize had wanted.

He could picture it now. Could picture Duo's smart mouth being fucked by Treize's long, hard cock. Could picture Treize chuckling as he filled Duo's tight ass or came on his face. Could picture Duo so eager to learn and so very, very eager to be fucked and filled.

The mental images were simultaneously arousing and revolting, as Zechs thought back to the spring, to all of the many ways he had fucked Duo in the lab, in this very office. It had been perfect, so perfect, too perfect. A brilliant boy who could keep up with Zechs at his work, who could assist him in every way. A brilliant, beautiful boy who loved to be fucked just as much as he loved to figure out the missing element that would solve a complex equation.

Treize would have delighted in him, would have used him up and

treated Duo as just yet another toy at his disposal, another devotee there to soak up his knowledge and his semen. And he would have left Duo desperate and aching and in love with him, perpetually unsatisfied with anyone or anything else afterwards.

"I told him no thanks. Told him he could go fuck himself, that I wasn't a whore. Told him I wasn't his slave."

Zechs sucked in a breath and met Duo's eyes in the dark. He couldn't see much, but he could see a glimmer there, could see the curve of Duo's lips, the flick of his tongue as he teased Zechs' cock.

"You aren't a whore?" Zechs asked and he mentally berated himself for how shaky his voice was. How desperate he sounded.

Duo shook his head. "Nope. I might be a good little slut, and I might deserve to be fucked over and over again until you can barely walk or breath, until you're dripping with semen. But I'm no whore. And I don't want anyone except you to fuck me."

Zechs felt relief, felt impossibly light, and he gave Duo what he so clearly wanted. He grabbed the boy's braid and he pulled his head down and shoved his cock deep, sliding into that welcome wetness and groaning. He fucked him hard, until they were both breathless, until Duo's face was wet with saliva and tears and finally, as Zechs came with a shout, cum.

Afterwards, Duo curled up against his legs, let Zechs run his fingers through his thoroughly mussed hair.

"You never responded to my emails. You ignored my calls. My texts. Iâ€¦ I thought maybe there was someone else."

Duo sounded fragile, his voice raw from having a cock rammed down his throat, his body tense.

Zechs tugged sharply on Duo's bangs and the boy hissed and then moaned.

"Of course there wasn't."

"I - I think I'm in love with you and I'm terrified."

Zechs stilled and he had a moment of panic, found himself wondering if he had spoken those words or if Duo had.

"I shouldn't have said anything. I'm sorry, I -"

Zechs stopped him, shut him up by clamping a hand over his mouth and then hauling Duo upright and forcing him against the desk, bending him over and using his free hand to unfasten Duo's khakis. He pushed them down, shoved his boxers down as well and he leaned down to spit into the dark, tight ring between Duo's cheeks.

"You should be sorry," Zechs said and his own voice was as rough as his handling of Duo's body. "And if you aren't sorry yet, I will make you very, very sorry," he assured Duo.

He heard the boy gasp, heard him grunt and then moan as Zechs worked a finger into him.

"Terrified? That's exactly what you should be."

Usually they had some kind of lubricant - Duo had started carrying some around with him after the second time they used up all of the antibiotic ointment in the first aid kit. They had stopped using condoms after the first month of Zechs bending Duo over stools and desks or shoving him against the floor or the wall, after Duo had casually left an envelope on the desk in Zech's office, where anyone could see it, and Zechs had opened it to see a list of STD results, all clear, and he had fucked Duo so many times that night, had really left him barely able to walk and literally dripping with semen.

But Zechs hadn't thought to bring any today, and Duo's pockets held nothing but his wallet and keys and Zechs realized - Duo really had thought Zechs had someone else. He had thought things were over between them.

He had never been this rough with Duo, had never prepared him so little and he hesitated, but then Duo was reaching between them, was angling Zechs' cock into his barely stretched hole and pushing back and they both groaned as he penetrated Duo's body.

Zechs was merciless as he fucked him, loving Duo's grunts of pain and pleasure equally, desiring both, needing both to get off, to reach that precipice and then send himself over, roughly jerking Duo off at the same time so that the boy cried out and spilled over Zechs' hand.

He sat back down in his chair, flaccid cock still inside Duo, and pulled the boy close.

Zechs pushed his braid aside and placed a kiss at the base of his neck.

"I want you to be just as terrified as I am."

-o-

Ahem. Well. It's been a while (? has it?) since I wrote some smutâ€¦ so there you go.

7. Chapter 7

A/N: For chemicalcrush, who wanted the following prompt from the Bad Dates Prompts/Ideas:

"I'm on a really shitty blind date and you got fed up with the asshole I'm with so you dump water on their head and ask to take me on a better date. I totally accept." Featuring 2x3

A/N #2: A huge HUGE thank you to Maevemauvaise for being my beta and for being so so encouraging as I wrote this. You are the best.

Warnings: language

Pairings: 2x3, old 3x5

Blind Date

This was the absolute last time I would _ever_ go out on a blind date that my sister set up. And this time, unlike the five other times I had made the same promise to myself, I _meant_ _it_.

It was almost as if Cathy was _trying_ to find awful men to set me up with - first the school teacher who hated children, then the Marine who still hadn't _actually_ come out to anyone except somehow my sister, the stock broker who thought it was sexy to talk about mutual funds while he tried to play footsie with me under the table, the food critic who spent our entire date sounding like a pompous asshole as he critiqued everything from the napkins to the overwhelming amount of fish on the menu of a restaurant with Ocean in its very name, the actor who had been so self-absorbed that I wasn't sure ever bothered to even learn my name.

Ever since my breakup with Wufei and, I could admit now, awful coping method of fucking my way out of loneliness, dating had seemed like a complete waste of time. And while I appreciated Cathy, appreciated that she loved me and was only trying to make things better, I did _not_ appreciate the string of blind dates over the past month that had left me almost paranoid about dating at all, ever again.

Tonight - this date - was even worse.

It was worse, so much worse than all the others, because I could see why Cathy had thought to set me up with the guy in the first place.

Treize Khushrenada. A several years older than me, his features perfect and just a little cold, dark blond hair in artful disarray on his forehead and clothes immaculate and perfectly fitted to his tall, lean form.

I'd heard of him, had seen his work, but I had never met him - had certainly never thought to be on a _date_ with him.

He was a choreographer, an absolutely brilliant one just back in New York after his great success with the Kirov last season, and I had dreamed of dancing with the companies he worked with since I was a child. Had dreamed of dancing for _him_ ever since I saw his _The Sleeping Beauty_ five years ago when I first started dancing with ABT.

Treize was brilliant and he knew it.

I didn't mind that - his arrogance wasn't at all off putting to me. Nor was the cool way his eyes assessed me as I walked up to him at the bar to introduce myself. I was used to eyes on me, I was used to eyes judging me.

What I wasn't used to was someone _sneering_ at me after looking over my body. It made me feel like I should haul out a barre and start practicing.

He was actually taller than me, which hardly ever happened, and he put his hand on the small of my back as he propelled me towards our waiting table.

It felt like we were in the rehearsal hall, like he was moving me into the position he preferred and I found it unexpectedly irritating.

Wufei had been bossy as hell - in bed and out and I hadn't minded. I had loved it, probably too much based on some of the things he had said during our last fight - but he had never made me feel like _just_ a dancer, like a marionette that wasn't quite up to snuff.

He had merely lifted an eyebrow when I told him of my promotion from the _corps_ to Soloist at ABT. Had asked why I wasn't dancing Prince Ivan in the upcoming production of _The Firebird _and had chuckled and shaken his head when I told him that I had been cast as Koschei.

He had arched another eyebrow when I ordered a draft beer instead of a glass of wine or just water.

When the waiter returned and started to list the specials, Treize waved him off.

"I'm not interested," he said in a tone that would have had me looking down and praying I hadn't made a mistake.

Not the waiter.

He cleared his throat and when he next spoke he sounded almost combative.

"Of course not," he said, "but maybe your date is?"

I looked up then, away from my menu and Treize's glacial eyes and into the unexpectedly handsome face of in front of us.

He was probably my age, with long, messy brown bangs and bright, sharp blue eyes that were almost violet. His features were strong, his lips wide and his eyebrows were raised in question.

I shrugged one shoulder. To me, food was food, and having someone intercede on my behalf wasâ€| unsettling.

The waiter nodded.

"Alright. No problem. I'll give you two a few more minutes to look over the menus?"

"Thanks," I said before Treize could speak up and the waiter offered me the slightest of smirks before turning and walking away from out table.

It was only then that I saw his long braid of hair, swinging across his back, the longest tendrils brushing over his ass.

We were silent as we looked over the menus again, and when the waiter returned he arched an eyebrow at me and I swear it looked like he was asking me if I was okay.

I wish I had paid attention when he first walked up to our table and introduced himself before taking our drink orders.

"I will have the salmon," Treize said, carelessly shoving the menu into the waiter's face.

He blinked and then narrowed his eyes before seeming to shake himself and then turning to me.

"And you?" he asked and offered me a smirk that did curious things to my pulse.

"The lamb."

"The _lamb_? Don't you have a performance tomorrow?" Treize seemed as horrified as he was shocked.

Ballet was one of those sports where people - audiences, choreographers, even other dancers - expected athletes who were capable of amazing feats of strength and stamina but still needed to look fragile and willowy. It was harder for women - I knew that. Cathy, older than me by five years, had suffered so much for her career that in the end she had given it up. I could still remember being eleven and having one of the older dancers teach me how to force myself to throw up a too heavy meal.

I was naturally on the thin side, despite my broad shoulders, and I had never had a problem burning more calories than I ate. I had never been one of those called into the artistic director's office and given the nutrition speech that was really just code for _stop eating and get better at starving yourself_. I had never had a choreographer look at me with the same critical, disappointed eyes that Treize now regarded me with.

And I had definitely never had a lover look at me like that. This had been one of Wufei's favorite things to pick a fight over - except he was on the other side of it. He was convinced I was going to kill myself, that I was too thin and that I was the most unhealthy, healthy person he had ever met. He had been right - he almost always was, but that didn't make his interference any more welcome.

"The lamb is excellent," the waiter said in a tight voice. "Killer yoghurt marinade." He took the menu from my hand, the tips of our fingers brushing, and I looked up to see him wink at me.

I let go of the menu and took a long sip of my beer while he walked away and I refused to watch him go.

Treize, however, was definitely watching me.

"How many calories _is_ the lamb?" He asked.

As if I knew. It wasn't published in the menu and it wasn't as if this place, where one meal was the same as what I paid for food for an entire week, could be bothered to care about anything other than flavor and presentation.

I shrugged and he snorted and then chuckled, low and cruel.

"Of course. You'll take care of it later."

I flushed at his words, his knowing look.

He took another sip of his wine, tilting the glass towards me in a mock toast that made my hands clench into fists.

"I'm sure you've heard that I will be choreographing *Le Spectre de la Rose* for the winter gala."

I had not, in fact, heard that, and I couldn't hide the way my eyes widened.

It wasn't a remarkable ballet - it was short, with only two roles, the perfect piece for a gala benefit for ABT's wealthiest patrons - but it was one of the more notorious ones for male dancers. The *Spectre* was a great - if brief - role. It required incredible strength and it was a role I had dreamed about ever since I saw Nureyev dance it on a staticky VHS recording of the 1979 performance for the Joffrey Ballet. As soon as the piece had been announced for the gala I had been working my ass off - showing up early to every practice, taking extra barre classes, working out more, doing my damndest to make sure that any leap I did for any choreography was as powerful and high as I could make it.

Treize laughed at my expression and he leaned back in his chair and chuckled again.

"I danced it, you know, when I was your age."

I did know. I had seen a recording of that too. Like most choreographers, Treize had started out as a dancer and moved into the fine art of abusing dancers into composition when he had grown too old or his body too brittle.

"You were breathtaking," I said, the truth. He wasn't Nureyev - no one was. Hell, even Nureyev wasn't Nijinsky. But Treize had still been very, very good.

It was the wrong thing to say, however, and Treize merely lifted an eyebrow and seemed bored.

I found myself wondering how the hell Cathy had even arranged this date in the first place.

Her new position, teaching for the Joffrey Ballet, kept her in Chicago - which I had foolishly assumed was far enough away not to interfere in my life until she had proven, with this string of blind dates, that that was absolutely not the case - and meant that she was still in the ballet world. But Treize didn't work with the Joffrey - he had famously quarrelled with three of their artistic directors and been banned from ever working there again.

"What are you working on before that?" I asked, because the silence was growing oppressive and fiddling with the hem of the tablecloth was a ridiculous pastime for a twenty-five year old man on a date.

"A new piece with the City ballet. A little too avant garde for my tastes," he shrugged again and offered up a thin smirk, "but Lincoln Center is practically home for me."

I don't know if I had ever heard a more arrogant remark, delivered in such an offhand way. It startled me into a laugh and Treize arched an

eyebrow in question.

I shook my head and took another sip of beer. It was nearly empty and I wondered if Treize would have a fit if I ordered another.

"Another?"

It was the waiter, appearing silently beside us and gesturing to the nearly empty glass in my hand, as though my thoughts had summoned him.

"Yes. Thank you."

The waiter smiled and our fingers touched again as he took the glass.

Treize scowled.

I wondered if it was because of all of the calories in two glasses of draft beer or if it was because he had seen the way the waiter and I had touched, had seen the way I flushed at the contact.

Doubtful. It had to be the calories.

The waiter returned with my beer only a moment later, despite how busy the restaurant was, and I had to restrain myself from taking it out of his hand, from trying to touch him again.

I was, after all, on a date with another man. A terrible date, to be sure, but still.

"Your food will be right out," the waiter assured us.

"Thank you," I said, but Treize barely even acknowledged the existence of the other man.

"How do you know my sister?" I finally asked, so very done with the silence and the judgement and unable to figure it out myself.

"I don't. My cousin, Dorothy."

Oh. Oh shit.

I had no idea the two were related.

Dorothy Catalonia, a principal dancer with the Joffrey and the woman my sister had married last year. A woman who, frankly, terrified me. She had joked, at the wedding, that I should move out to Chicago and dance with her. I had heard horror stories from other men who had danced with her, of her snide remarks and universal loathing for men.

Treize hadn't been at the wedding, but then, he didn't strike me as being very family orientated. And the more that I thought about it, I wasn't even surprised that Dorothy hadn't mentioned being related to him to me. I wondered if anyone, outside of Cathy, even knew. Dorothy was fiercely independent and would likely castrate anyone who dared to suggest she had had a step up in the industry just by being related to Treize.

"I see."

Treize gave me a thin smile.

"I'm not sure you do. Dorothy's mother is my father's favorite sister. And Dorothy is the reason why I am no longer welcome at the Joffrey. Or at the family home in Marseilles."

I had to arch an eyebrow.

I was pretty sure Treize was no longer welcome at the Joffrey because he had stopped a dress rehearsal dead by calling the principal a fat cow and suggesting she stop bending over for the artistic director because taking his soft dick up her ass was clearly ruining her technique.

"Dorothy doesn't like you?" I guessed, only managing to sound a little sympathetic.

"Dorothy doesn't like anyone. Except, perhaps, for your sister."

"Perhaps." I had seen them together a few times, before the wedding, and it always amazed me that Dorothy, such a notorious bitch, doted on Cathy and looked at her with complete adoration.

"She's a petty girl and she has let childhood conflicts cloud her judgement," Treize said with an irritated sigh and an unconcerned shrug. "It hardly matters."

I was saved from further comment when the food arrived. The waiter laid it out and smirked with pride, as though he had made it himself.

"I had them put a little extra yoghurt on yours, trust me - it really makes the meal," he said to me and winked again.

I found myself smiling back, amused and touched. The waiter was an amazing contrast to the cold egomaniac across the table from me.

I had had maybe five bites of the lamb - and it was amazing - when Treize looked up from his salmon and gave me a considering look.

"Don't eat too much of that."

I glared and decided enough was enough. Le Spectre be damned. I lived on a shoestring - between my paltry salary from ABT, the cost of living in the city, and the fact that I never indulged in food. This night was clearly a disaster and if nothing else, I was going to enjoy the damn lamb.

I opened my mouth to say just that, but I felt Treize's warm, hard thigh against mine under the table.

"I hate fucking boys when they are bloated," Treize said, his voice as smooth and unconcerned as it had been when he ordered his glass of wine at the beginning of the meal.

My face drained of all color and I looked away from his cold gaze.

It had happened before. Of course it had. When I had been an apprentice with the company, I had had several soloists and principals - even a few choreographers - offer me meals or gifts or something for a rough, unsatisfying fuck. When I had been a guest artist with the Paris Ballet last year there had even been a patron who felt that, since he was sponsoring my stay for the season, he had the right to treat me like his personal whore.

There was no way Cathy had done this to me, not on purpose. Not knowingly. Not after having to listen to her go on and on for the past month about how meaningless sex was going to leave me lonely and probably riddled with STDs. Not after the tangent she had gone on about syphilis ruining my ability to dance.

Desperate to look at anything that wasn't Treize, my gaze skittered across the restaurant and it met that of the waiter, just one table away, and I saw the fury in his eyes, the compression of his lips, the way his hand held a pitcher of water in a white knuckled grip. I wondered what he was so pissed off about.

He walked over, determination and anger in every line of his body, and he very purposefully dumped the pitcher of water on Treize's head.

I gaped.

Treize shouted and jumped back from his seat, water flying, his salmon drowned, his wine spilled, his clothes soaked.

He hadn't seen the waiter approach, and when he turned to glare at him, the man adopted an expression of horror and apology.

"Sir. I am so so sorry. You are completely soaked."

"I am well aware of that," Treize bit out.

If he had been looking at me like that, I would have known to back up my bag and start looking at the call boards to see if a company in Topeka was hiring. He looked ready to pick up a fork and start stabbing the man.

The waiter wiped at Treize's shoulders ineffectually.

"You might want to visit the restroom," he suggested, "and use a towel or something."

"I will," Treize growled. "And then I will speak to your manager."

He stalked off and it was only then, as everyone recoiled from Treize while he stormed past, that I realized how much attention had been focused on us.

"Sorry about that," the waiter said to me once Treize was gone.

I arched an eyebrow.

"I mean. I'm sorry if youâ€¦ liked him or whatever. But I seriously couldn't listen to him talk to you like that anymore. I mean - if this is your thing. If you two are in some kind ofâ€¦ does he always treat you like shit?"

I had to laugh and then I shook my head.

"Blind date. I've never met him before tonight."

The waiter closed his eyes and sighed in what looked like relief.

"Thank god. I was debating whether or not to do something but _"

"You realize he's going to get you fired for this."

The waiter smirked, broad and unrepentant and he went from being merely handsome to breathtaking.

"Well he can _try_ but my uncle owns the place and he's kind of a fan of mine."

I found myself returning his smirk and the waiter leaned in close.

"Listen, ahâ€¦ if you're not interested just say no and I'll fuck off - because the last thing you need after this shitty night is another unwelcome advance butâ€¦ you know. If you need like, a palate cleanser or something, I'm here."

I arched an eyebrow, completely at a loss. Was he seriously offering me a sorbet or something?

The waiter flushed and shoved his bangs out of his eyes.

"I mean, can I take you out? On a date? On a better one than _this_ one?"

He looked sincere and unsure and - and he was nothing like the guys I normally went for. He was a _waiter_. He was my age. He was happy. He wasn't an asshole.

"Yes," I decided as I caught sight of a still furious, still wet, Treize coming our way again.

"Yes. Yeah?" He grinned and he looked even younger, but his enthusiasm was infectious. He winked at me. "Okay. Cool. Let me go get Howie so he can pretend to be pissed at me and ah, if you just hang out at the bar my shift is over in an hour? Or -"

"That sounds good."

He grinned again, gave me a jaunty wave, and sauntered past Treize.

There was another scene, where Treize spoke sharply to Howard, the owner of the restaurant as well as the head chef, while the waiter - whose name, I learned during the scene, was Duo, stood at his side with a bowed head and a failure of an expression trying to look

somber and regretful on his face.

Duo apologized, mumbling the words only when Howard elbowed him sharply, and Treize gave an angry huff, said he refused to pay for such a disaster of a dinner, and grabbed my arm as he started to leave.

I jerked free, surprising both of us, when we reached the door.

His eyes narrowed.

"It was nice to meet you," I lied, my voice as cold and empty as his had been for most of the night.

His lips twisted into a sneer that was already familiar.

"I do hope you didn't have your little heart set on dancing Le Spectre," he murmured.

I had. Which he knew. Had no doubt seen in my eyes when he first brought it up. But I would be damned if I bent over for this asshole.

I tilted my chin up and glared. "I'd rather dance it for someone who matters," I said.

The words, the forced bravado, were definitely a mistake and I was sure they would have a negative effect on my career.

But then Treize chuckled and he ran a possessive thumb over my lips. "Ah. So you do have a spine. I was beginning to wonder."

He looked me over again and he shrugged. "I generally like my boys smaller than you, anyway. But we'll see how you do at the auditions."

And then he was gone.

I wasn't sure what had just happened - and I really didn't want to dwell on it, or him, anymore. So I went to the bar and I ordered another beer, even though I knew I would probably regret it, later, when I was bent over my toilet and had bile burning my throat, and I waited for Duo.

-o-

Okay. So this came dangerously close to wanting more. Ok. I won't lie. It wants more NOW. But I don't have time. I have other things to write. But I have ALWAYS wanted to write a ballet! Trowa fic and well, this will have to content me. For now.

Okay so yes. I'm totally working on the long form followup.

8. Chapter 8

For chemicalcrush, inspired by a photo posted on my tumblr for the club!verse Maeve and I keep torturing ourselves with.

Pairings: 1x2, 3x5xM

It wasn't even a real club.

I was pretty sure it had NEVER been zoned to be a club - pretty sure it hadn't ever had a visit from an inspector of any sort - VERY sure they didn't have a liquor license.

But it was Thursday night and neither Trowa nor I had classes the next day and my roommate had been determined to go out, to get drunk and laid and probably - DEFINITELY - do something or someone he would likely regret.

So I went with him, pulling on a navy flannel plaid t-shirt shirt and pushing up the sleeves haphazardly. After all, I wasn't going to the club to get laid. I was simply there to make sure Trowa didn't end up passed out or dead in a corner.

Even so, even though I had determined to just have ONE drink and nothing else, as soon as we walked down the dark, mirrored entrance hall and I felt the heavy bass of music pounding into the walls, into my very skin, I couldn't help but enjoy the feel of my suddenly racing heart, of every thought drowned out by the loud music, of my eyes struggling to adjust to the blacklight overhead.

Trowa was gone almost immediately, smoothly making his way across the dance floor and positioning himself near a Chinese man and woman. I watched, amused, mentally betting with myself whether or not he had a chance with either one of them. I was betting not, the man looked possessive as hell, judging by the arm he had wrapped around the woman, his fingers in the back pocket of her impossibly tight black jeans, and while the woman, her short hair dark hair tipped in either white or blue judging by the way the lights made it glow, smirked up at Trowa's approach, she was grinding against the other man as though he was the entire center of her universe.

I was already starting to prepare jokes about it, thinking of how to razz Trowa about it tomorrow once his inevitable hangover wore off, when the Chinese man reached out and dragged Trowa against his back, sandwiching himself between the slightly shorter woman and the much taller and broader Trowa.

Even across the room, I could see Trowa's triumphant smirk, could see the way his hands greedily moved over both of their bodies and how he pressed his groin against the other man's ass.

Well then. Home run for Trowa.

I got my one drink - a vodka tonic that had almost no tonic - and leaned against the wall to watch. I kept one eye on Trowa, but I looked over the press of bodies with idle curiosity.

Dancing had never been my thing - Trowa would say I had personal space issues, while I would point out that HE was incapable of making personal space boundaries unless safe words and handcuffs were involved - but I didn't mind watching, didn't mind the way the music thrummed through my body or the vodka through my blood.

There was one dancer, in particular, that my gaze kept drifting back towards. In the thick of it, white sleeveless t-shirt cut into a low v-neck in the front that showed a flat chest, long hair loose and

flying with every flick of their head, one of the most beautiful people I had ever seen danced.

I couldn't tell if it was a man or a woman - the clothing, the hair, the slim frame all appeared completely androgynous to me. And when they tilted their head back, when the black light washed over their perfect face, all I could think was that they were stunning. Man or woman - I had never seen anyone more stunning.

I nursed my drink and watched them, watched as they danced with men and women alike, grinding against them in ways that even Trowa would have lifted an eyebrow at and I entertained myself with the fantasy of walking out there, of joining them on the dance floor and pulling that slim, taut body close and wrapping my hand in all of that hair.

And then they saw me, wide lips curving into a wicked smirk, and started to walk towards me.

I felt like prey, felt like an incredibly dangerous predator was coming my way and oh how I wanted to be devoured.

They came closer, backed me up against the wall and pulled a hand on the wall near my head.

Even this close, I couldn't tell if they were a man or a woman and I realized that I absolutely did not care.

"You know," they said, leaning close to shout into my ear, wet lips brushing against the shell and making me shiver, "this isn't really a spectator sport."

They pulled back and raised an eyebrow at my nearly empty glass.

"Vodka," I said, hoping they heard me.

They smirked and took the glass from my hand, took a healthy sip, and then leaned close again and pressed that too damn sexy mouth against mine.

It took me by surprise and I opened my mouth - ready to gasp or protest or moan, I wasn't sure - and they opened their mouth as well and I felt the cool slide of vodka, the rough press of their tongue, the searing hot cavern of their mouth.

I wrapped my arms around their waist and hauled them even closer, felt their right hand run through my hair, short nails teasing against my scalp.

They moaned into my mouth, nipped at my lower lip, and pulled away enough to smirk at me again.

They stepped out of my embrace and held out a hand.

"Join me?" I couldn't hear them, could only guess at the words their mouth formed, but I reached out and took their hand and let them lead me.

9. Chapter 9

Warnings: language

Pairings: 3xM, 3xMx5

Group Work

Group projects, on the whole, were a complete waste of time.

Wufei could still remember the FIRST group project he had ever been assigned: he had been in first grade, had been paired up with two perfect blond children and instructed to work with them to build a castle and the results had been disastrous. They had wanted ramparts and Disney; he had insisted on sky wells and the Forbidden City. It had ended with all three of them needing stitches and Wufei's parents deciding that he would do better in a Montessori school environment.

This particular group project promised to be just as dangerous, just as disastrous as THAT one had been.

At least it wasn't as asinine - it was a research project for his Non-Western Settlements course and, since the upper level Architecture course was his favorite this semester, the instructor, Treize, the most intimidating and brilliant man Wufei had ever encountered, Wufei had actually been looking FORWARD to the project until Treize added the words, "I will assign your groups a topic."

The trouble the REAL trouble, aside from the fact that, even after sixteen years, Wufei still did not play nicely with others, was WHO he had been assigned to work with.

Wufei almost would have preferred those two WASPs from his childhood to the two students who, after Treize had paired them off, gathered up their bags and moved over to his corner of the studio.

Meilin Long, a girl whose glare was as fierce as her tongue was sharp, who dressed in severe black and white almost every day and always looked prepared to attend a funeral or carry out an assassination.

Trowa Barton, a boy whose piercing green eyes were half hidden by a fall of auburn hair and who seemed perpetually amused by something but uninclined to let anyone else in on the joke.

They were, without a doubt, the sexiest individuals Wufei had ever encountered.

To say that they were distracting was an understatement.

He had had courses with them before - two with Trowa, three with Meilin - but had never spoken to them, never done more than look at them over the rims of his unfashionable glasses and wonder what it would feel like to be worthy of their attention.

He had seen them together once, working late in one of the studios on scale models for a class he hadn't been taking, had watched them pass glue and Exacto knives back and forth without looking up. Had watched

Meilin stop and stretch, watched her lean over and whisper something in Trowa's ear that had him turning a knowing smirk in her direction and run his thumb over her dark red lips. Had watched Meilin lean close and put those lips over Trowa's, watched Trowa haul her into his lap and Wufei, sitting at a computer terminal across the room, the only other person in the studio, had felt like an insignificant pervert.

He had awkwardly, angrily cleared his throat when Barton's hands pushed Meilin's skirt up to expose her strong, pale thighs and they had broken apart, had both turned to him with cocked eyebrows and Wufei had shoved his belongings into his bag and stormed out.

And so, NOW, when they sat on either side of him and Meilin casually took the pen from his hand and begin to outline their project on HIS notebook, while Trowa propped his chin on his hand and reached over Wufei to tap at the paper between them, he couldn't help but feel like this would all end in a disaster far, far worse than a parent teacher conference and seven stitches.

-o-

Late nights of horrible pizza, of Trowa showing up late to group meetings because of his job, of Meilin making catty remarks when she got too tired, of Wufei unable to form coherent words when the coffee wore off, had meant that, by the time they met the night before their project was due, Wufei knew the other two far better than he had ever expected to. Far better than he had ever dreamed of.

He knew what music they liked - knew that Trowa thought Meilin's obsession with Hamilton was adorable to the point that he purposely set her up with lines to encourage her to drop in a lyric from the musical. He knew that Trowa was ticklish, especially his sides, and he knew that Meilin used that knowledge to her advantage whenever she thought Trowa was too serious or too cranky. He knew that the biggest argument they had had in recent months was over the fact that Trowa was Team IronMan and Meilin was Team Cap. He knew that they were completely shameless and uninhibited when it came to their relationship. While there was no outright groping, they both touched each other in casual, constant ways that drew Wufei's attention to them. A press of their shoulders, a hand on the small of the back, a tap of their knees together, a quick, careless kiss on the top of the head.

It was maddening, to be the silent observer of such perfection, to see the seamless way they worked together, joked and fought, to see the moments when their brains turned towards sex, tipped lips and hooded eyes and flushed cheeks.

But it wasn't until that last night, so late that not only were they the only students left in the studio but that the hall lights were dark and even the janitors long gone, that Wufei broke.

He was sitting at the computer, clicking through the assembled slides, Meilin to his right and Trowa leaning over them from behind.

Trowa reached out and tapped the screen, pointed out a typo and Wufei, in the process of fixing it, thought of a better way to introduce the topic and changed the title heading.

"Nice," Meilin said and carelessly squeezed his thigh.

Wufei swallowed hard, looked down to see her pale hand resting on his jeans and even though clothing separated them, he felt as though her touch was burning into his skin.

He held himself rigidly still, waiting for her to move away, but she didn't and he turned his attention back to the screen and continued through the presentation.

When he reached the end, Trowa gave his shoulders a squeeze.

"Good work. We should ace this."

"At the very least, our presentation will be more professional than whatever nonsense Duo comes up with," Meilin snorted. She leaned back in her chair, finally moving her hand away, and Wufei breathed a sigh of relief.

"Remember the interpretive dance he used when he had to give that presentation on Roman aqueducts in Intro?" Trowa asked and they both nodded.

"Idiot," Meilin said, but her voice was fond. Intro had been a waste of time - the professor nearly seventy and the only thing keeping him from getting fired was his tenure.

"Soâ€¦ would it be presumptuous of us to celebrate?" Trowa suggested.

"Celebrate being better than Duo?" Wufei asked, turning in his chair to arch an eyebrow at Trowa. "Wouldn't that become a daily occurrence?"

Trowa's lips quirked.

"I actually meant we should celebrate finally finishing this project."

"Oh." That didn't sound presumptuous at all and Wufei frowned. "How were you planning on celebrating?"

Trowa shrugged one shoulder, looked at Meilin instead of Wufei.

"A drink - Freakin Frog is still open - or, you know, the way Meilin and I usually celebrate momentous occasions."

Heero looked between them in confusion and waited for one of them to elaborate.

"He means sex," Meilin said with a roll of her dark eyes. "Trowa is trying in his oh so subtle way to ask you if you want to come over to his apartment and let him fuck you."

"Oh."

Wufei didn't know what to say, didn't know what to think. His brain was finding it almost impossible to put any meaning to those words.

"Whatâ€¦ what about you?"

Meilin lifted her brows. "What about me?"

"Youâ€¦ you want Trowa toâ€¦ fuck me?" Wufei found himself blushing, found himself having to fist his hands at his sides in an effort to NOT reach up and adjust his glasses in the same nervous habit he had had since he was a child.

"If you do, yeah." She gave him a bright smile, full of teeth and promise. "Of course, if you wanted Trowa to fuck you while YOU fucked me, I'd want that even more."

All of the blood left Wufei's head and rushed straight to his groin. All of the saliva left his mouth and disappeared to god only knew where. All rational thought left his brain and vanished into the ether.

"Well?" Trowa prompted. "Interested?"

Wufei could only nod, but it seemed to be enough for them.

"Good." Meilin stood up. "Pack up your things and let's go. Trowa's ONLY be fantasizing about this since we first saw you and as much fun as I've had listening to him talk about just how he wants to bend you over and shove his cock up your ass while he fingers me, I'm ready for more than just his words and me imagining how good your cock will feel."

10. Chapter 10

For the Anon on tumblr who requested 1x2 for #38: "You faintedâ€¦ straight into my arms. You know, if you wanted my attention you didn't have to go to such extremes."

Pairings: 1x2

Warnings: angst, language, violence

Thirty-Eight

He felt old.

He felt old and tired and misplaced, as though he belonged somewhere else - some_when_ else - and he had gotten lost.

He also felt irritated.

An alarm was going off, blaring into what, seconds before, had been the silence of early morning.

With a scowl, Heero reached over and shut off the alarm.

Seven-thirty. Why was he getting up at seven-thirty when he had only just fallen into his bed at five?

The alarm wasn't his regular - six - but then, it was a Saturday, and

he had nowhere to be, nothing to -

His phone started to ring.

Heero groaned and wondered just how many more ways his life could go wrong. It had seemed that, in the last thirty six hours, he had wracked up an impressive tally already.

He grabbed his phone from the charging cradle and angrily thumbed it on.

Duo's name and a photograph of him sticking his tongue out dominated the small screen.

Heero hadn't done that - hadn't saved Duo's number or the photo. Duo himself had added them, had either stolen or hacked into Heero's phone a week after he first purchased and Heero hadn't cared enough to delete the photo of Duo.

At least, he told himself he didn't care. It was easier than admitting to himself that he did care. That he cared too much. That on the too rare occasions when Duo called him, when Heero saw the photograph, his heart and stomach did curious flips in his body that shouldn't be anatomically possible.

"What?" he growled into the phone.

"Well good morning to you too, sunshine," Duo responded with a chuckle. "Just giving you a wakeup call and see if we're still on for building the deck today."

Oh.

Heero had completely forgotten about that, about the promise he had made Duo months ago to help him add a deck to the other man's miniscule cottage on the beach.

Duo had asked in the mess, at lunch, in between diatribes about the shitty state of the newest Preventers recruits. Trowa had begged off, lying smoothly about being out of town that weekend to see Cathy; Wufei had sneered and told Duo that he was insane if he thought Wufei had ever - would ever - do manual labor for him. Heero had been caught unprepared, when Duo turned hopeful eyes to him, a forkful of mashed potatoes in his mouth that suddenly felt like sand.

He hadn't been able to think of something - of a lie or a cutting remark - and had found himself nodding instead. Duo had smirked, had risen from his seat and clapped Heero on the back and called him 'my man.' And Trowa had given Heero a knowing look and shaken his head.

That had been last week.

And last week -

Last week had been a lifetime ago, it felt like.

"Heero?" Duo prompted.

"Hn?"

"Deck? Hard wood getting nailed? Hammers and -"

"Yes," Heero interrupted what would likely be an impressive string of double entendres and euphemisms. "We're still on."

"Right-o. Be over in fifteen to pick you up. Hey, and if you don't have any protection, don't worry - I've got you covered!"

Heero groaned. "Duo -"

"I'm talking about work gloves man, get your mind out of the gutter, Yuy!"

"Right."

Duo ended the call and Heero let himself fall back onto the bed.

He grunted as he landed awkwardly and clutched his ribs.

They were bandaged, as tightly as he could stand, broken and bruised, and he wondered if he would have time to rewrap them before Duo arrived.

Probably not, if he wanted to change the bandage on his shoulder.

Heero forced himself to get up and he walked into the bathroom, wincing as he turned on the overhead light and was nearly blinded.

He blinked at his reflection, thoroughly unimpressed.

Heero looked like a man who had only had two hours of sleep - looked like a man who routinely only had two hours of sleep - and there was stubble along his jaw and above his lips.

He ran a hand over the rough hair. He usually shaved, every morning - every other if he couldn't manage - but he had been in the field for the last four days, unconscious in an alley on L3 and slowly bleeding out for six hours, at the mercy of a crew of gunrunners none too happy to have their warehouse of merchandise seized by the Preventers for a twelve hours before that.

Shaving hadn't really been on his list of priorities, and it was going to have to take a backseat today as well.

He gingerly tugged the bandage off his shoulder, having to stretch across his wounded ribs to do so and he felt the sharp, breathless pressure of pain.

But pain was okay. Pain had been his lifelong friend, and Heero had long ago taught himself to, if not ignore it entirely, to at least distance his physical state from his mental one.

He worked quickly, cleaning out the gunshot wound thoroughly, and rebandaged it.

Heero managed to brush his teeth and was in the middle of wincing his way through putting on a clean shirt when Duo knocked on his

door.

He opened the door to admit the other man, taking in Duo's grin, the sunglasses hooked on his t-shirt, the tattoos that circled his wrists like cuffs.

"Yo," Duo greeted him and cocked an eyebrow at the state of Heero's apartment.

Messy and uncharacteristic for Heero, which Duo unfortunately knew.

"Haven't had the chance to clean," Heero muttered and crowded Duo out of the apartment and back into the hall.

Duo snorted, opened his mouth to comment, but Heero glared at him and he abruptly shut his mouth.

To call the disaster they left behind _messy_ would be an understatement.

When Heero had finally been released from his debriefing yesterday, when he had finally made his way home, he had proceeded to thoroughly wreck the place.

He had taken out his anger, his frustrations, all of the emotions that had just risen up to consume him over the past forty-eight hours, on the furniture and the few meager possessions in his apartment.

It had been a mistake - he had regretted it as soon as he wiped the sweat from his eyes and looked at the carnage - and he didn't need Duo judging him for it.

The drive to Duo's cottage was silent, Duo correctly judging Heero's mood and instead of trying to engage him in conversation, Duo cranked up his radio and started to strum the steering column in time to the music.

When they arrived, Heero followed Duo out of the car and into the house.

It was, if Heero had to ever describe such a thing, the most idyllic house he had ever seen. It was small - with only one bedroom, a bathroom narrow enough that you had to turn sideways to navigate, and a galley kitchen that was separated from the main living space only by an island.

Duo, when he had given in to Une's conditions - work for the Preventers or face a lifetime of government surveillance and a possible trial - had immediately set about finding a house. If, he had muttered to Heero in the mess hall, he was going to be stuck on this fucking rock, he would at least live somewhere that made it worth it.

And while the inside of the cottage didn't seem to live up to that - the outside clearly did. It was right on the water, the sand only yards away from the back of the cottage, and miles and miles of clear blue water stretching out to the horizon.

It was perhaps the exact antithesis of L2, of the life that Duo had known before the war, of the life he had fought for.

However, it was remarkably easy to reconcile Duo to these surroundings. He moved through his house with the kind of slouchy grace that Heero never saw at Preventers headquarters - or in public at all - and then when they stepped outside, Duo smirked at the way the sun glinted off the waves and strapped on his tool belt.

"Alright, 'Ro, ready to build me a kickass deck?"

"No," Heero had to be honest, but he sighed and accepted the gloves, hammer and nail bag from Duo.

Duo gave him a look, his smirk fading. "Wellâ€¦ we don't have to? I mean, I can manage it on my own." He scratched at the back of his neck. Duo didn't really have many tells - he was so good at pasting a joker's grin on his face and laughing while when he should have been writhing in pain. But the neck scratch - Heero had first noticed it when they were fifteen and now, ten years later, it was still the easiest way to tell that Duo was feeling unsure of himself.

Heero sighed and shook his head. "No. I promised to help."

Duo shrugged. "Well yeah, but -"

"If I leave you unsupervised there's no telling how unsafe you will make it," Heero cut in.

Duo stared at him for a minute, still trying to gauge Heero's mood, but then he shook his head and smirked.

"I think you're forgetting, buddy, that I am the superior engineer."

"Tell that to Trowa's roof."

"Okay but that -"

Heero had to smirk at the indignant look on Duo's face.

The long haired man rolled his eyes and muttered something under his breath.

"Yeah, laugh it up, Yuy," he said, voice louder. "Now quit dragging your ass and grab that 2x6."

After two hours of work - both of them hauling planks into place to build a frame about the piers that Duo had sunk into the ground himself last weekend - Heero was finding it increasingly hard to breathe. Every breathe he took resulted in a sharp, stabbing pain to his chest and he wondered if he was making his ribs worse - wondered how much worse he was making them.

Heero paused and wiped the sweat from his face with the hem of his shirt.

"What the - Ro? Why the fuck are there bandages all over you?"

Shit.

Heero tugged his shirt back down and glared at Duo.

"Minor injury."

"Your last mission?" Duo asked and he stepped closer.

Heero shrugged and turned away. He did not want to - _could not_ - talk to Duo about the mission.

"Okayâ€|" Duo gave an exasperated sigh. "Let's just finish up the frame and we can grab lunch before starting on the planks."

The thought that there was more - that Heero had hours and _hours_ left of this to go - was almost his undoing.

But Heero managed to soldier on, managed to hold the last 2x6 in place while Duo hammered it in and then -

Then he felt a wave of pain and nausea and -

-o-

Heero drew in a deep breath and became immediately aware of the fact that he was _not_ where he was supposed to.

He was prone - his body stretched out on something lumpy and soft and very unfamiliar - and he hurt like hell.

The air smelled different. He wasn't in his apartment, wasn't - wasn't dying in an alley.

Slowly, cautiously, he opened his eyes.

Duo's home. His couch. The same couch that Heero had unloaded from the moving truck with Duo four years ago when the other man finally decided that he should probably have more furniture than folding chairs.

"Hey."

He rolled his head back and saw Duo leaning against the wall behind him, arms folded and face grim.

"What happened?"

Duo cocked an eyebrow. "You don't remember?"

Heero shook his head in the negative. He just remembered the sun beating down on him, remembered sweat on the back of his neck, remembered pain and - nothing else.

Duo's lips twitched.

"You faintedâ€|" straight into my arms. You know, if you wanted my attention you didn't have to go to such extremes."

Heero closed his eyes. How incredibly embarrassing. Duo would hold

this against him for _years_. Duo still gave Wufei shit about being scared of a spider and demanding that Duo get rid of it - and that had been seven years ago.

"Ro."

Duo's voice was soft and serious, and it prompted Heero to open his eyes again. He had moved, pushed away from the wall and was dropping into a crouch in front of Heero.

Duo reached out and touched Heero's shoulder and it was only then that he realized he wasn't wearing a shirt.

"You bled all over it when you pulled out your stitches so I, ah, kind of cut it away so I could see what the hell was wrong with you."

"Sorry. I -"

"What the _fuck_ are you apologizing for?" Duo's gaze had suddenly turned fierce. "Bleeding all over my couch or _not_ telling me you had a bullet hole in you_ or lying to me about your fucking ribs or _"

"I didn't like. It's minor."

"Right. That bruising looks _real_ minor. Look, Yuy, you don't get to _"

"Hamisch is dead."

Duo was shocked into silence.

"What? No. She - I just - what do you mean she's dead?"

"I mean she's dead. She was with me on the mission. We got the weapons cache but during our exfiltration she - they grabbed us and they wanted intel but she wouldn't break and they killed her." After torturing her for what felt - sounded - like hours while Heero, being worked over just a few feet away, had been unable to do anything but watch when they had finally put a gun to her head, blonde hair plastered to her skull by sweat and blood and dirt, and pulled the trigger.

Duo stared at him.

"I let her die. She - she died because I wasn't -"

"Shut your fucking mouth, Yuy!" Duo was suddenly in his face, gripping his good shoulder so tightly it felt like his _bad_ shoulder. "Shut your mouth."

Heero scowled. "Wh -"

"You didn't _let_ her do anything, you monumental asshole. She -" Duo paused and drew in a deep breath. "She was the best, Yuy. She was the best recruit I've ever trained and you - you did not _let_ her do anything. Don't you fucking _dare_ imply that she didn't make the choice to be there, that she didn't - that she _couldn't_ - don't you fucking dare, Heero."

Heero swallowed hard, at the emotion in Duo's voice and on his face. He reached up and wrapped his hand around Duo's.

"I'm sorry," he said again. "I -" he faltered when Duo's fingers turned and curled against his own.

"You scared the shit out of me Ro," Duo breathed. "And I - I can't - you can't fucking die on me, too."

-o-

So SO sorry it took me so long to get to this Anon and I'm sorry that it's not, like, super explicitly 1x2.

End
file.